



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor 2-82 Abn. Public Affairs)

"Army Chicks"

Spc. Herrick Lidstone, a radio operator with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, plays with a baby chick he found in the backyard of a house he was searching while on patrol in east Baghdad's Sha'ab neighborhood May 12.

Sacrifice every day, not just mom's day

**By Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert
1st ACB Public Affairs**

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Serving thousands of miles away from Family Members for the holidays is not easy for any Soldier, and according to two Soldier moms from 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, spending Mother's Day away from their children is not any more - or less - difficult than any other holiday.

Sgt. 1st Class Anitra Carter and Sgt. Vall Hart, both from 2-227th, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, didn't dwell on

spending Mother's Day on the opposite side of the world as their children.

While missing Mother's Day - and other holidays - is difficult, both said they think about why they serve to put the holidays into perspective while they are deployed.

"Sure, it's a sacrifice, but it's a sacrifice of love," said Carter, from Pritchard, Ala. "I told my daughter that I'm here to help the Iraqi people. To help her understand it, I told her that I am here to help the kids in Iraq."

"She said: 'There are kids in Iraq?'"

Carter and Hart both learned a lesson

about sacrifice from the most humbling of forces - nature.

Carter's and Hart's mothers both were affected by Hurricane Katrina which hit the New Orleans area Aug. 29, 2005. Carter's mother, Joyce Carter, lost everything in her apartment in Chalmette, La. Joyce now lives in Carter's home in Copperas Cove and cares for Carter's 10 year old daughter Laosha. Hart's mother, Melba Hart, was displaced for about eight months - also from Katrina - and spent

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Natural disaster, war bring two mothers together

Mom

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that time living with Hart. She has since returned to New Orleans and is caring for Hart's 10-year-old son Kalyn there.

Carter and Hart, who both work in the same 2-227th personnel office, didn't know each other until they found themselves in the same unit in November 2005.

Carter was about to deploy to Iraq from Germany and Hart had just redeployed with III Corps from Iraq at the time that Hurricane Katrina hit. Both Carter's and Hart's children were staying with their grandmothers.

Hart's mother left New Orleans before Katrina hit, and made it all the way to Houston where Hart, who was based at Fort Hood, met her and brought her home.

"Normally, my mom stays and tries to ride the storm out," Hart said. "When I heard that she was coming to me, I took emergency leave. I met her in Houston



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert 1st ACB Public Affairs)

Sgt. 1st Class Anitra Carter (left), and Sgt. Vall Hart, show photos of their children Laosha and Kalyn, respectively.

and brought her back to Killeen.

"It really brought us together and made our relationship stronger. My son didn't really know his grandma all that well before this, but now he stays with her for the school year and comes back to me in the summer."

Carter left Germany on emergency leave and went to Fort Polk, La., then on to New Orleans to find her daughter and mother. They were evacuated after

Katrina hit and taken to the Houston Astrodome, which is where Carter finally found them.

Both Hart and Carter are single mothers, and they said that can be difficult at times.

"It's double the work, really," Carter said. "I think that every day you have to make sacrifices. You hear daily that your kid did great on a test and you want to be there to reach out and hug her. My daughter and I are both touchy-

feely kind of people. If I had been there for Mother's Day, she would have come in my room, kissed me and said, 'Happy Mother's Day!' That's what I miss, that closeness."

And while they don't complain about being deployed, they miss the little things that being with their children gives them.

"I miss sitting down and helping Kalyn with his homework," Hart said. "You have to do everything from a distance."

As they have done with other holidays away from their children, Carter and Hart got through this one by thinking more about what their sacrifice means, instead of focusing on the sacrifice itself.

"My son understands why I'm here," Hart said. "It can be hard, but I have to keep in mind why I'm over here."

"Sometimes it seems like every day is a Monday, but there is a very important reason that we are here," Carter added. "I know my daughter sees that there is a purpose to this."

Arabic Phrase of the Day

hissa

Defined:
now

Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

High: 100
Low: 77



Tomorrow

High: 103
Low: 79



Wednesday

High: 102
Low: 78

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Deployed moms stay in touch with home

By Staff Sgt. Wayne Marlow
2-2 Inf. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq - Spc. Latoya Roberts will be spending this Mother's Day away from her 1-year-old son, but she's doing everything she can to shorten the distance.

"I have pictures of him everywhere and I talk to him on the webcam every weekend," she said. "He gets so excited; he points at the camera and blows kisses."

Roberts, a human resources specialist from Anniston, Ala., who serves with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, had to leave 21-month-old X'Zavier in October.

"It's hard," she concedes. "It's terrible."

But the weekly webcam contact keeps her fresh in X'Zavier's mind and gives her the impetus to drive on.

Last Mother's Day, she went out to dinner with her then 9-month-old son. This time, they will be brought together by the webcam. It's certainly not the same, but just seeing and hearing him will help, she said.

Before deploying, she explained it as best she could to a 1-year-old.

"I said, 'I'm going to be gone, but I love you, and I wouldn't leave if I didn't have to,'" Roberts recalled.

She had spent time with nieces and nephews before becoming a mother, so she had some idea what parenthood would bring.

"Every child is different,"

Roberts said. "To have your own is just trial and error, especially with the first one."

While she waits to be reunited with X'Zavier, Roberts is content with photos and memories.

"I would pick him up from daycare and he would smile and run toward me," she said. "It's quite a feeling just knowing you have that person's life in your hands and you're responsible for them."

The hardest part of being away from her son is "just his smile and his laughing, and being able to see him grow up."

He seems to coping relatively well with his mother gone. "He's still a happy-go-lucky kid," Roberts said.

X'Zavier is staying with his father in Georgia during the deployment, and Roberts said he has developed some hobbies.

"He watches lots of cartoons or anything with real vivid colors," she said. "And he likes to dance."

Like Roberts, Staff Sgt. Constance Woods clearly remembers her last Mother's Day. She received handmade cards from her children and also enjoyed breakfast in bed.

This year, she will have to settle for a telephone chat with Phillip Jr., 8, and Brianna, 5. But both Woods and her children are making the best of it.

"It'll be hard to be away from them and not be there," said Woods, an automations noncommissioned officer for HHC, 2nd IBCT. "But they seem OK when I talk with them on the phone. They're happy to hear from me and are



(Photo by Staff Sgt. W. Wayne Marlow 2-2 Inf. Public Affairs)

Spc. Latoya Roberts watches her son via webcam during one of her weekly "visits" with her 1-year-old son, X'Zavier. She keeps her son's picture near her desk in the personnel office at Forward Operating Base Loyalty as her motivation.

always in a rush to tell me exactly what they've done since the last time I talked to them. And they tell me to buy them something to bring home to them."

As she prepared to deploy, Woods tried making it easier for her children by breaking the deployment in half.

"I just told them I had to go on a deployment for six or seven months because I knew I was coming back on leave at the end of March," she said.

Her son, Woods added, "kind of understands" that the unit has been extended, although "my daughter doesn't really get the idea yet."

But however long they're apart, they will be staying in touch.

"I call at least once a week," Wood said. Also, when she shoots her daily Instant Message to her husband, "I tell him to tell them I

love them and miss them."

Brianna will start school in the fall and missing this, as well as not being able to help Phillip with his homework, is the toughest part of being away.

"And both have grown about four inches since I've been gone," Wood said.

With Woods away, her children stay busy riding bicycles, watching movies, and playing sports.

"They're as happy as two young kids can be (under the circumstances)," she said. "They get quiet sometimes, which is not normal for them."

Woods said motherhood is "everything I thought it would be and more." While she's sad to be away from her children on Mother's Day, she's keeping a positive attitude.

"I'll make it through it," she said. "I'll live to see next Mother's Day."

A Mother's Day deployed

By Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4-1 Inf. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - "I'm going to explain to him that I was out defending our country, and taking care of my family and doing what's right," Spc. Jessica Bailey said.

To hear the young mother of one talk about her son, 2-year-old Caleb, her love for him is obvious.

The unit supply specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, is currently serving at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad and will miss spending her second Mother's Day with Caleb.

While it is tough being away, the Dayton, Ohio, native said she finds ways to keep in touch.

"I call him almost every day," she said. "I talk to him so he can at least hear my voice," she said. "He looks around and looks for me when he's on the phone with me."

Even for those mothers who have been away from their children for long periods of time, it doesn't get any easier.

Capt. Trisha Meyer, the personnel officer for the Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div., answered her nation's call to serve in Korea for six months when her son, Crispin, was three months old.

Now, she is serving at



(Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith 4-1 Inf. Public Affairs)

Spc. Jessica Bailey, a unit supply specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Dayton, Ohio, looks at a picture of her son, Caleb, at Forward Operating Base Falcon May 2. Bailey said she sleeps with Caleb's hoodie every night to keep a part of him close by.

FOB Falcon while Crispin, who is two now, waits with his sister, Savanna, who recently turned one, on Mom to come home.

"He kind of gets the whole 'Momma's across the ocean, saving other little boys and girls,'" Meyer said.

"He thinks it's cool."

As cool as it may seem, Meyer said she's looking forward to having time to bond with her son once she's done with her current tour in Iraq.

Until then, video, e-mails and photos help her keep in touch with her

children.

Bailey said she has her own ways to deal with being away from her son.

"On my off time, I think about him," she said. "I try to stay busy and keep my head up. I've found that the busier I stay, the easier it is."

Bailey said she recently purchased an Iraqi cell phone to better stay in touch with Caleb.

At night, she sleeps with her son's hoodie that she bought for him to keep a little piece of him close by. "It means a lot to me because it's his," she said.

"It's the only thing of his I have out here."

While Bailey and Meyer agree that it is tough being away from their children, both are optimistic about the future.

"Hopefully, by next year I'll be home. We'll have a bigger Mother's Day," Meyer said. "There'll be other Mother's Days."

"You can always make up for the time that you missed," Bailey said.

"I love my son dearly, and I can't wait to go home and see him," she said.